



*WEST UNIVERSITY PARKS AND OPEN SPACE
A PARK SYSTEM MASTER PLAN REPORT*

THE CITY OF WEST UNIVERSITY PLACE, TEXAS
West University Parks and Recreation Board

November 2000



*White Oak Studio
Landscape Architecture*



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City of West University Place



Dear Residents and Friends of West University,

Over the last decade our city has made great strides in improving parks and recreation for the citizens of West University Place. Under the leadership of countless volunteers on our Parks and Recreation Board, enabled by the funding activities of the Friends of West U Parks and assisted by City Council and the professional staff of the Parks and Recreation Department, West U has worked diligently to upgrade existing parks and acquire new parks land. In response to a parks master plan prepared more than 10 years ago, the city, with the help of these citizen groups, has spent over \$1,000,000 and logged thousands of volunteer hours enhancing our parks. Our accomplishments include:

- Acquiring additional property to expand Colonial Park and property in the City Center
- Purchase and development of Huffington Park
- Major renovation of:
 - Judson Park
 - Wier Park
 - Whitt Johnson Park

In late 1999, your Parks and Recreation Board decided to evaluate the progress made over the last decade and plan for the continued improvement of parks and open space in West University Place. The Parks and Recreation Board decided to retain qualified professionals to assist in that process. After interviewing several candidates, White Oak Studio Landscape Architecture was selected. Included on the team was Dr. David Scott of the Texas A&M University Recreation Parks and Tourism Sciences Department, an expert at involving the public in park planning processes. The Parks and Recreation Board has worked diligently to prepare this master plan to help guide our city's activities and expenditures for the next five to ten years.

Development of the Master Plan

An important part of the preparation and acceptance of this plan was to involve extensive input and feedback from the people who finance and use our parks: the citizens of West University.

A citizen preference survey was prepared and sent to every household in the city in early 2000. This survey collected residents' opinions on a variety of parks and open space issues. The executive summary of this report may be found in the back of this Master Plan Report, while copies of the full survey and results are available for review at the West U Parks and Recreation Department.

As the survey was being implemented, the Master Plan Team, consisting of the West University Parks and Recreation Board, White Oak Studio Landscape Architecture and Texas A&M Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, performed a thorough inventory and analysis of our parks, recreation facilities and green spaces. After the inventory was completed, the Parks Board, other West U citizens and a representative from City Council conducted several design and input workshops with the Master Plan consultant. The survey, workshops and analysis led to several general conclusions about the current status of parks in our city:

- Recent parks development was greatly needed and has been very well-received by West U residents
- Residents believe our parks are very well maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department
- There is a great demand for safe and convenient places to walk, run and bicycle for enjoyment and transportation around West University

- There is a perception that we still have a shortage of parks and open space in the city
- There remains a need for additional recreation facilities in the city
- West U is being increasingly 'built-up' and there is a growing need for green open space in the city.

This report will look at these issues and others from a regional context down to the specific park facilities. The report outlines goals and guiding principles for our future, but it also provides very tangible recommendations for the steps needed to ensure appropriate parks and recreation facilities for the residents of West University Place.

Organization of the Report

The first section, entitled "A Look at Today," provides a brief overview of West University and its relationship to the surrounding urban area.

The second section, entitled "A Look at the Future," is divided into five major issues for parks and open space in the city. Each issue is subdivided into major objectives followed by specific actions necessary to help achieve those objectives.

It is important to remember that this report is a planning tool, to be used by future West University Parks and Recreation Board members, City Councils and others as we continue to make decisions regarding the wise use of our monetary and physical resources. Factors that influenced some recommendations may change over time and we will need to remain in touch with current conditions, especially the needs and wishes of West U residents.

This Parks and Recreation Board appreciates the opportunity to serve you, our fellow citizens of West University Place. We know how much work has gone before us and we want to do our share to help this wonderful city continue to be all that it can be. We hope you find this report interesting, helpful and inspiring.

Sincerely,

West University Place Parks and Recreation Board

Will Bertron, Chairman

Evans Attwell
Marcela Chennisi
Michael Hood

Burt Ballanfant
John Graf
Mark Mailes

Renelle Cadena
Linda Gray
Christi Quinn



A LOOK AT TODAY

This section of the report describes West U as it is today – a beautiful small town within a major metropolitan area. The city presently has park and recreation facilities ranging from small neighborhood parks to sports fields and a public swimming pool.

West University — A Neighborhood City

West University Place has a unique mix of single family homes, small businesses and retail shops, churches, parks, an elementary school and civic/municipal buildings. Most of the city's 2 ½ square miles are residential neighborhoods. Several small parks are located within the neighborhoods, while business, office and retail shops are located along busy perimeter streets. In the geographic heart of the city, the City Center area forms a small central business district, anchored by the expansive grounds of West University Elementary School. Around the school on three streets are municipal buildings, businesses, shops, churches, the public library and civic spaces of both West University and Southside Place.



Aerial View of West University Place

The Heart of Hometown . . .



Friendly People



Neighborhood Shops



Stately Trees



A Chance to Be Involved



Neighborhood Churches



Beautiful Homes



Great Schools

... in the Center of a Great City



Regional Context of West University Place



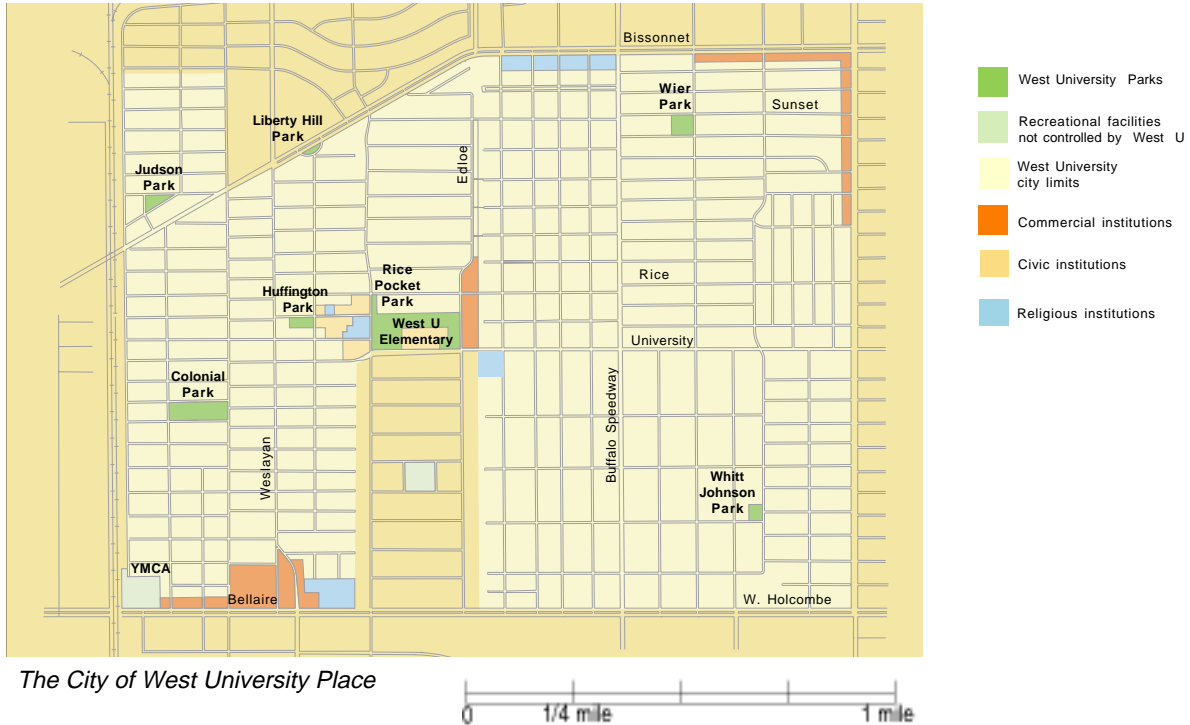
Aerial View of West University Place and Houston

West U is just a few minutes from

- Downtown Houston
- Texas Medical Center
- Rice University
- Houston Museum District
- Greenway Plaza
- The Galleria / Uptown
- Astrodome
- Great Regional Parks

West University Parks

The City of West University Place



WEST UNIVERSITY PARKS

The city currently has seven park sites, five of which are developed with public recreation facilities. A major addition to the city-owned park sites is a large portion of the West U Elementary School grounds, which the city leases from Houston Independent School District for sports fields.

Colonial Park, the largest and most developed of the parks, has a swimming pool (with a seasonal inflatable covering for winter use), tennis courts, recreation center, playgrounds, sand volleyball court and open play areas. With those unique facilities, located in a residential neighborhood in the southwest side of the city, Colonial Park serves the entire City of West University. Since the swimming pool was developed with state recreation grant funds, the pool facilities are open to the general public, and attract users from Houston. In the fall of 2000 the city completed the acquisition of residential lots to expand the park to fill the whole city block.



West University Parks

Judson Park is located in the 'chimney' area, north of Bissonnet. Judson was renovated in 1997 and includes one tennis court, open play areas, separate children's play areas and a picnic deck overlooking the tennis court. The park is fenced from the surrounding streets.



Liberty Hill Park is not currently improved with any public use park facilities. The park is an unusually shaped parcel fronting Bissonnet, with streets along the back two sides of the park. There is a large earthen mound with a major city sign and public art facing Bissonnet. The site has several mature trees with grass underneath.



Rice Pocket Park, a 60' x 110' undeveloped parcel, is located in the City Center on the corner of Auden and Rice Streets across from the Community Center and the Harris County Public Library. The property was acquired in 1996.



Wier Park, located along Sunset Boulevard in the northeast portion of the city, is a very heavily used park. The park was renovated in 1994 with children's play areas, a small open lawn, picnic tables, two tennis courts and a partial basketball court. The park is heavily used by small children. The playgrounds and open lawn are separated from the perimeter streets by ornamental fencing.



West University Parks

Huffington Park was completed in 1995 after the property was acquired by the City. The park is located just west of the City Center, across from the public works shop facilities. Huffington is primarily a passive use park, with a playground for very young children, a shade structure, picnic tables and open play area with rolling mounds.



Whitt Johnson Park is a small neighborhood park in the southeast corner of the city. The park received a major face-lift in 1999 and provides playground equipment, benches, picnic tables, lighted basketball surface, a gazebo, gravel walking paths and a small open lawn. All of the park areas are fenced from the two perimeter streets.



West University Elementary School is a 14-acre HISD campus in the center of West University Place. While the grounds are closed to the public during school hours, they are available when school is not in session. West U leases portions of the campus grounds for youth sports leagues. These leagues have developed baseball, soccer and football facilities for boys and girls. These fields are open for use by the school children during the day, with the exception of one baseball field at the southwest corner of the property which is fenced for exclusive use of the Little League. There is a concession stand / press box facility for this field at the prominent corner of University and Auden. There are also three playgrounds within the campus, including one large area at the southeast corner of the site, designated for use by the Beehive preschool on campus. The school parents' organization is actively planning for the renovation and re-construction of the campus play areas.





A LOOK AT THE FUTURE

Parks and open spaces are a very important part of life in West University Place. They offer spaces to play, common areas of civic pride, places to see and enjoy neighbors and green space where residents can experience the outdoors and the natural world.

Residents of West U have a variety of needs and interests related to parks. This diversity is reflected in the survey, *An Assessment of Parks & and Recreation needs in West University Place, June 3, 2000* (refer to the Appendix of this report for the Executive Summary of the survey). Providing for that diversity of recreation requires careful planning. The remainder of this report is divided into five major issues related to parks and open space. Within each issue are general objectives and specific actions recommended for West University Place.

- *The Right Park in the Right Place*
- *A Park Near Home*
- *Mobility in the City*
- *Civic Spaces – Green Places*
- *Recreation Facilities for the Future*



A LOOK AT THE FUTURE

• The Right Park in the Right Place

It is very important to plan for parks and recreation facilities to be well integrated into the community. Some recreation activities need to be available close to home. It is especially important for the oldest and youngest residents to have open space within a comfortable walking distance from home. Other recreation activities are not appropriate very near homes. Facilities that generate excessive noise, vehicular traffic or activity levels are better suited to larger parks that have some separation from residences.

The Right Park in the Right Place

OBJECTIVES

○ Provide parks that are appropriate to their location in the community

- Parks must be good neighbors to surrounding residents
- Facilities and activities should be appropriate to the neighborhood and purpose of the park
- Parks should not attract excessive vehicular traffic onto residential streets

○ Provide parks that are beautiful, unique and contribute to the character of the neighborhood and to the city overall

- Continue to upgrade and update existing parks
- Include unique imaginative elements that give each park a personality
- Establish common palette of support furnishings: benches, trash cans, fences, signage, lighting

○ Establish a two-tier system of parks based upon site, use and location



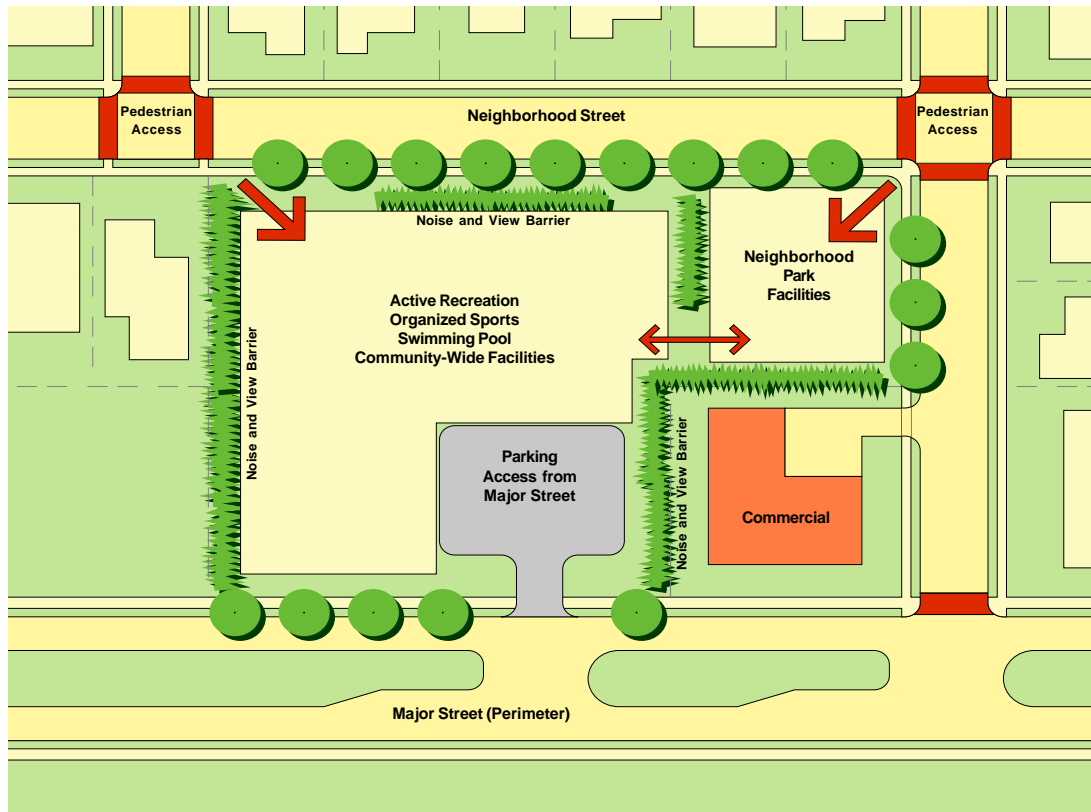
Prototype Neighborhood Park

Tier One – Neighborhood Parks

- Small quiet parks that serve nearby residents
- Emphasis should be given to facilities that serve residents who most need walking access to parks – the youngest and the oldest residents
- Locate within residential areas for easy walking access
- Provide facilities that are compatible with the neighborhood

The Right Park in the Right Place

OBJECTIVES



Prototype Community Park

Tier Two – Community Parks

- Park size and facilities serve entire city
- Provides active and passive recreation
- Accommodates pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular access and parking
- Locate community parks to accommodate use from outside the city
- Provide neighborhood park facilities with appropriate separation / integration of active and passive activities

The Right Park in the Right Place

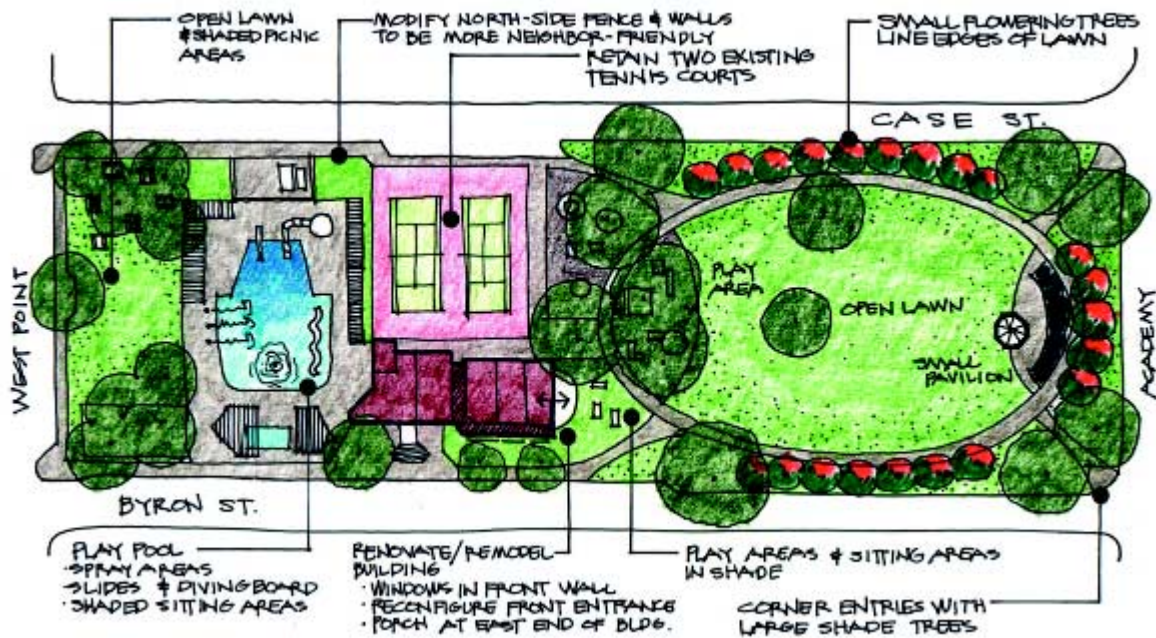
ACTION

A Redevelop Colonial Park as a combined neighborhood and community park

Colonial Park is located in the heart of a quiet residential neighborhood, yet the park functions primarily as a Community Park. The swimming pool, tennis courts and indoor recreation facilities serve the entire West U community, so the park attracts far more traffic, parking and crowds than a neighborhood park should accommodate.

- Develop a park master plan that addresses the park's unique nature as a joint Community Park and Neighborhood Park
- Renovate or rebuild the building
- Integrate building more effectively into modified park site (entrance, east end, tennis courts)
- Renovate pool as a recreational pool with slides, shade structures

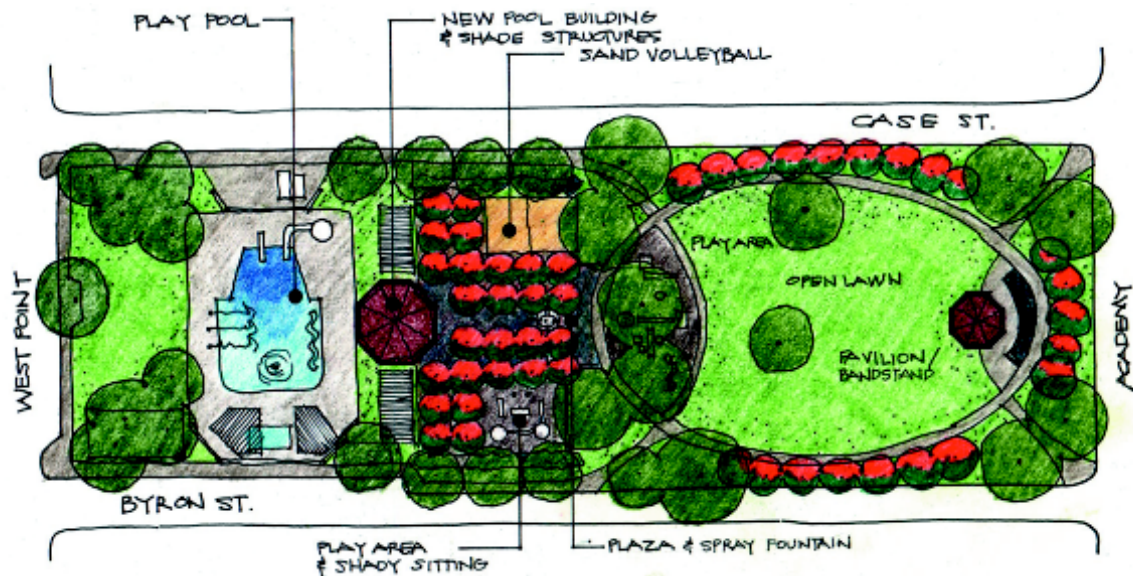
Three possible development scenarios



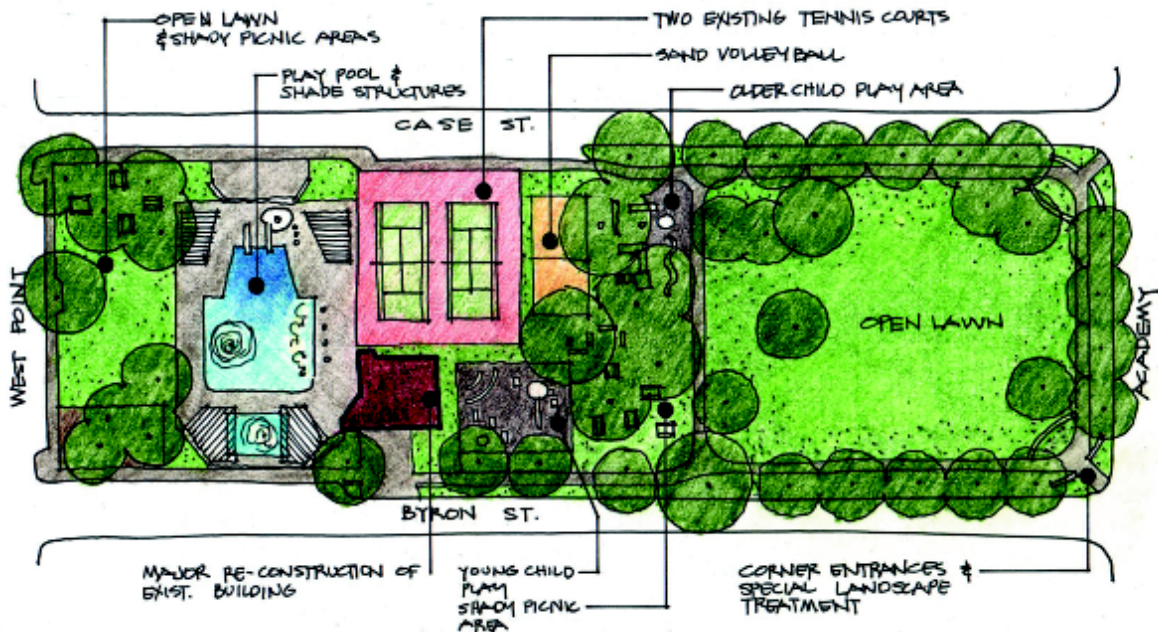
- Renovate / remodel building
 - Retain two tennis courts
 - Upgrade pool as a family play pool – slides, spray features, shade structures
 - Develop east half of the park as open lawn with play areas, flowering trees and a small pavilion

The Right Park in the Right Place

ACTION



- 2
- Construct new pool building with open-air shade structures
 - Remove two tennis courts
 - Develop tree-filled plaza with spray fountain
 - Renovate pool as family play pool
 - Develop east half of park as 'village green' with open-air bandstand



- 3
- Reconstruct building and retain pool-related and restroom facilities only
 - Retain both tennis courts
 - Expand play areas
 - Develop east half of park as open lawn with surrounding tree-lined sidewalks
 - Renovate pool as family play pool

The Right Park in the Right Place

ACTION

- A Upgrade play areas to provide unique, creative play opportunities



- A Develop standards for park furnishings



The Right Park in the Right Place

ACTION

A Modify Wier Park

Wier Park is heavily used by young children. Currently the two tennis courts physically dominate the park, limiting space for play areas and sitting.

- Remove one tennis court and partial basketball court
- Renovate / reconfigure play area
- Construct new shady sitting area and small water play area
- Re-align fences and sidewalks to separate walks from streets

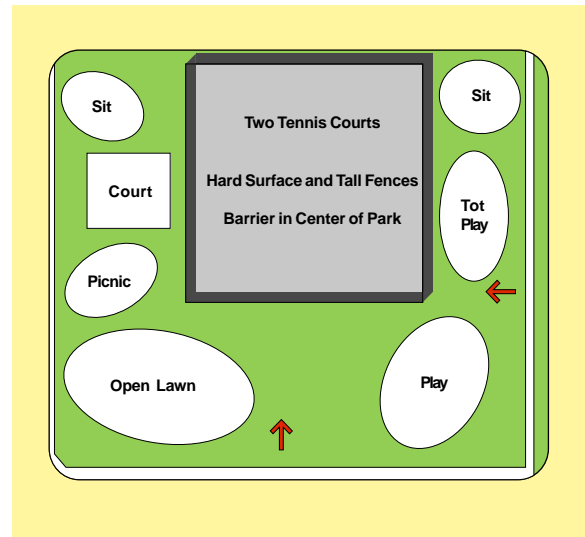
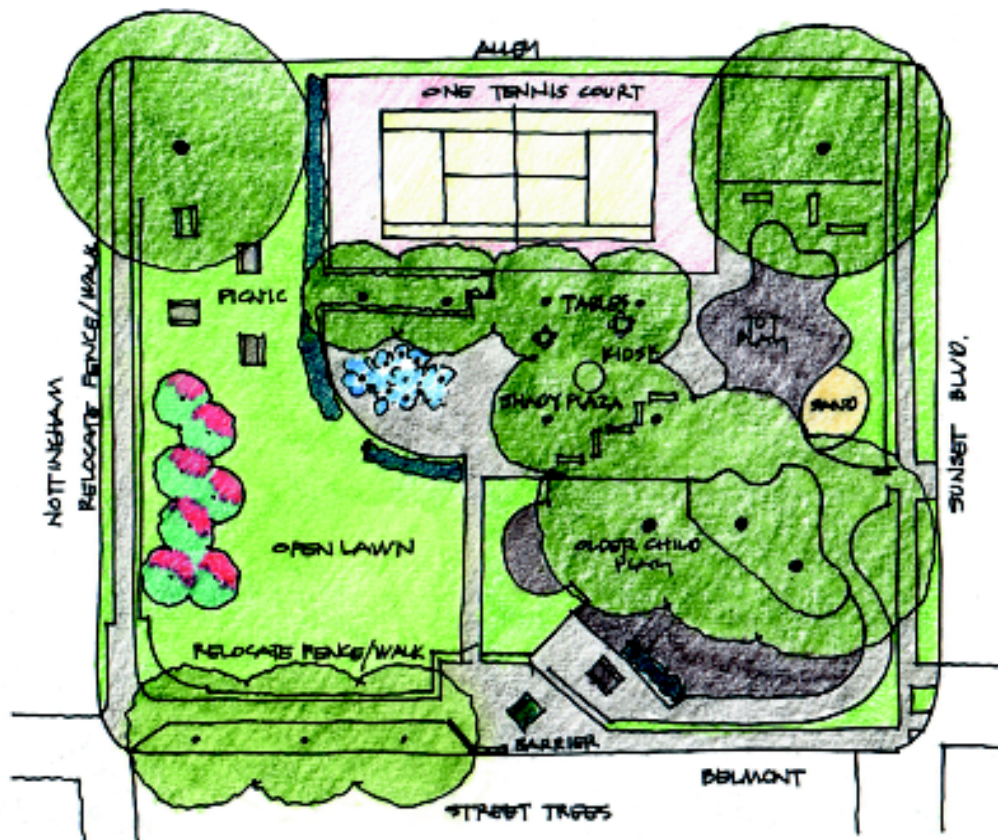


Diagram of existing park - park is dominated by central tennis courts - limiting play and sitting areas

Possible development scenario





A LOOK AT THE FUTURE

• A Park Near Home

Neighborhood parks are the small parks that provide green space and recreation facilities closest to homes. These parks are a fundamental part of a well-functioning urban park system. They enrich the lives of nearby residents and add value to neighborhood houses. Ideally, every home in West University Place would have such a park within reasonable walking distance.

A Park Near Home

OBJECTIVES

- Ensure neighborhood park facilities within 5 to 10 minute walk from all homes
- Encourage walking and biking to parks
- Reduce barriers that discourage walking and biking to parks
- Acquire land in key residential areas to add neighborhood parks
- Develop existing unused parks in key locations



1 Park Service Areas

- West University Park
- Within 1/2 mile of a West U Park
- YMCA
- Within 1/2 mile of West U Elementary



2 Barriers

- Barrier to Pedestrian Access
- West University Park

Neighborhood park facilities should be available within 1/2 mile (5 -10 min. walk) of all homes. Busy streets and the Poor Farm Ditch impose barriers to pedestrian access, effectively limiting park service areas. The major effect of those barriers is that the homes between Edloe and Buffalo Speedway do not have adequate pedestrian access to neighborhood parks.

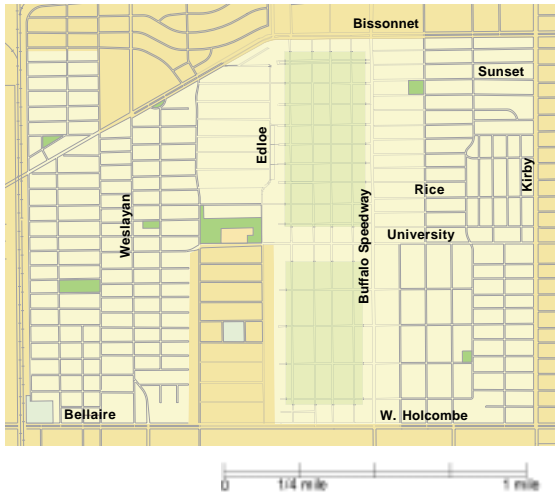


3 Access to Parks

- West University Park
- Within 1/2 mile of a West U Park
- Barrier to Pedestrian Access
- West U Park easily accessible
- West U Park not easily accessible

A Park Near Home

ACTION



Light green shading indicates primary target areas for neighborhood park acquisition

A Acquire land for new neighborhood parks in the area between Buffalo Speedway and Edloe, both north and south of University

- Acquire two parcels, each equivalent in size to two or three residential lots

A Develop a park acquisition 'swat team,' able to respond quickly to opportunities for acquiring park land

- Adopt park acquisition priorities – evaluate properties as they become available and determine if they would help meet the city's need for park space
- Investigate partnership between the City and private groups to enable evaluation and decisions in a time frame required by the real estate market



A Enhance neighborhood access to parks

- Provide continuous sidewalks near park - separated from curb by tree lawn
- Install crosswalks and pedestrian scale lighting at intersection
- Establish corner park entrances where feasible
- Change parking to provide parallel parking on park-side only to create safety barrier from traffic

A Park Near Home

ACTION

A Develop neighborhood park at Liberty Hill Park

Possible development scenarios

- 1
- Close College Ave. north of Northwestern St.
 - Provide tot lot and shaded seating area
 - Utilize mound, planting and fence to provide adequate barrier from Bissonnet Rd.



- 2
- Close College Ave. and Northwestern St. to increase usable park
 - Provide tot lot and shaded seating area
 - Utilize mound, planting and fence to provide adequate barrier from Bissonnet Rd.





A LOOK AT THE FUTURE

• Mobility in the City


The ability for people to walk and bicycle around West University Place is a very important aspect of recreation and open space. In fact, recreational walking is the single most popular activity among residents, according to the survey, *An Assessment of Parks & Recreation Needs in West University Place*. Good pedestrian and bicycle accessibility also enables residents to easily go to school, the City Center and parks without driving. This contributes to the overall recreation experience and reduces traffic and parking congestion around the city.

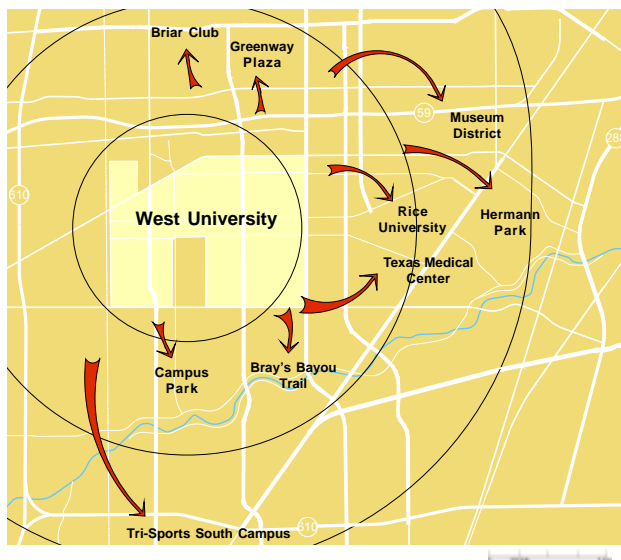
Mobility in the City

OBJECTIVES



Arrows indicate important pedestrian connections from neighborhoods to parks, school and city center

-  **Develop pedestrian linkages to the City Center and to parks**
-  **Delineate bike routes along key streets within West U**
-  **Eliminate barriers to pedestrian movement**
-  **Enhance pedestrian access and safety in and around park**

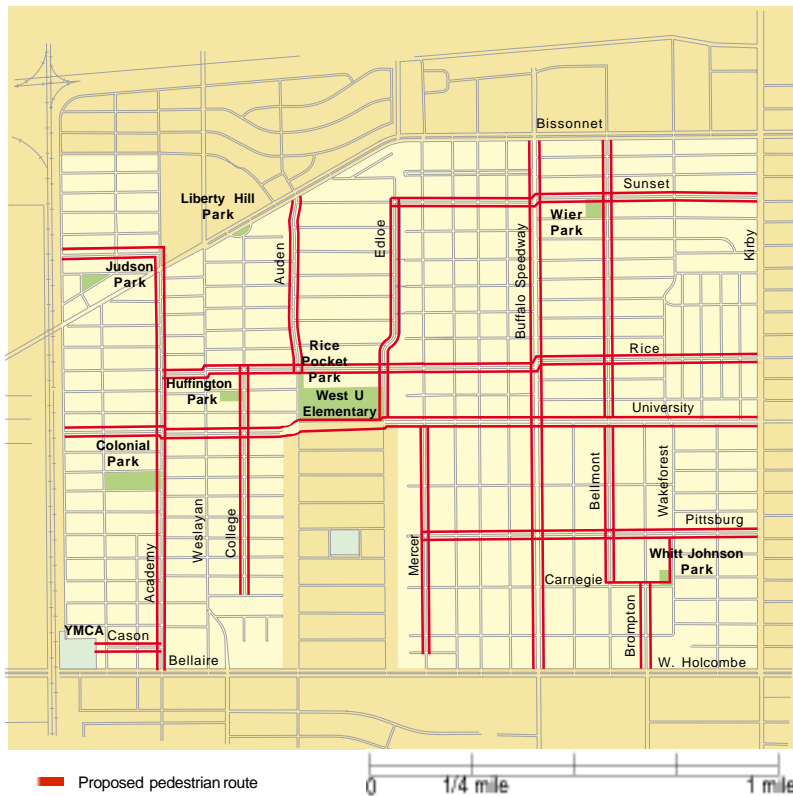


Key pedestrian and bicycling destinations outside of West University

- Work with City of Houston to encourage walking and bike connections out of the city**

Mobility in the City

ACTION



A Provide safe pedestrian routes

- Identify pedestrian 'collector' routes that link neighborhood with schools and parks
- Provide sidewalks and curb ramps to provide continuous pedestrian routes in traditional sidewalk configuration
- Widen sidewalks, provide lighting and benches where appropriate
- Provide sidewalks in all locations
- Create a promenade by widening sidewalks along University Blvd. between Kirby and Auden and enhance with appropriate lighting and street furnishing

A Upgrade pedestrian safety around existing parks

- Install sidewalks, curb ramps and crosswalks in parks and nearby blocks
- Install lighting near crosswalks and park entrances
- Initiate parking controls and traffic calming measures around parks where needed
- Refer to Neighborhood Park Access Map on page 19

Mobility in the City

ACTION



A Delineate bike routes along key major streets

- Install signs (no lanes or physical separation) to inform drivers and riders
- Coordinate with City of Houston bike routes to ensure connections
- Consider special bicycle lanes along portions of University Blvd.



A Reduce barriers to pedestrian and bicycle movement

- Install traffic light at Buffalo Speedway / Pittsburg and Wesleyan / Villanova
- Retrofit all traffic lights with hand-activated walk signals
- Install pedestrian bridges across Poor Farm Ditch
- Enhance sidewalk at Judson at Academy and Bissonnet to facilitate crossing Bissonnet

Mobility in the City

ACTION

A Develop linear greenbelt along Edloe Street

- Provide safe pedestrian connection from neighborhoods to City Center
- Collaborate with Harris County to install pedestrian bridges across Poor Farm Ditch
- Develop quiet sitting areas at dead-end streets



Poor Farm Ditch

Possible development scenario





A LOOK AT THE FUTURE

• Civic Spaces – Green Places

The civic landscape contributes greatly to the function and appearance of West University Place. Sidewalks, street rights-of way, school grounds, municipal facilities and city entrances are urban landmarks and gathering places. Along with parks and open space, these civic spaces form the network of green public landscape that is so important to West University Place. The following objectives will help West U retain and enhance the hometown character that distinguishes the city from surrounding Houston neighborhoods.

Civic Spaces – Green Places

OBJECTIVES

Enhance the hometown character of West University

Civic spaces – sidewalks, school grounds, municipal buildings and city entrances – are important to the function and appearance of the city. They are landmarks and gathering places, visible from the car and accessible on foot. Civic spaces are a vital part of hometown character.

- Ensure the City Center functions as the heart of West U — civic, commercial, open space, institutions and pedestrian environment
- Encourage the ongoing commercial viability of the City Center
- Develop parks and other civic open spaces as urban landmarks
- Provide safe convenient places for people to walk in neighborhoods. Sidewalks are important civic spaces.



The City Center is the focal point of West University, the magnet that holds the city together and makes the city different from surrounding Houston. The Center's blend of commercial, civic public school, open space and institutional facilities represents what is unique about West University Place.

Civic Spaces – Green Places

ACTION

A Upgrade the City Center streetscape and civic spaces

- Reconstruct Edloe and University Blvd. with medians between Edloe to Auden
- Create safe generous pedestrian ways by constructing new sidewalks with ornamental fencing, benches, lighting and planting
- Maintain a special palette of furnishings — paving, lights, furniture, fences — to unify the streetscape
- Change parking configuration to reduce visual clutter, while providing vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle safety



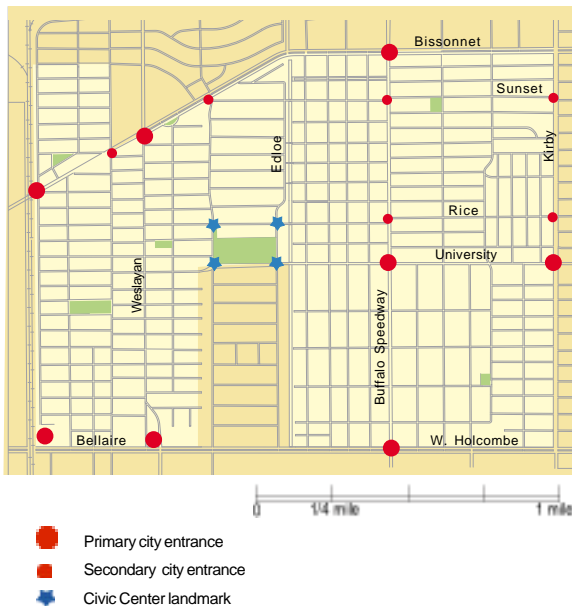
Possible City Center streetscape improvements

Civic Spaces – Green Places

ACTION



- A** Encourage private property redevelopment to enhance the civic character of the City Center



- A** Develop urban landmarks at important street entrances and civic locations
- Install signage, landscaping and lighting at primary city entrances
 - Construct landmarks with signage, landscaping, lighting, and paving at key corners in City Center
- A** Encourage private sector landscape improvements along important streets, medians and city entrances
- A** Develop landscape improvements for city owned parcels develop as community beautification
- A** Develop landscape maintenance schedule and coordinate volunteer efforts with private groups

Civic Spaces – Green Places

ACTION

A Consider three options for Rice Pocket Park

- Develop as a civic open space — a landmark / quiet plaza at an important entrance to the city center
- Hold to trade for property in advantageous location for neighborhood park
- Develop for other civic uses or use as the site for appropriate public building



Development of Rice Pocket Park might include an arbor for shaded seating, educational plantings and an urban landmark at the street corner.

Civic Spaces – Green Places

ACTION

- A** Enhance the public library courtyard as a civic gathering place and reading garden

The courtyard between the library and the community center could serve as an outdoor room with areas for storytelling and gathering. A kiosk for public notices might be included near the entrance



Civic Spaces – Green Places

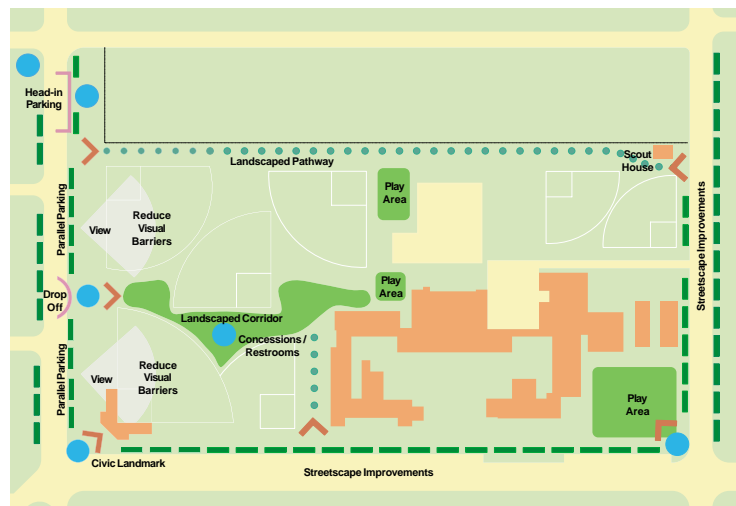
ACTION

Re-develop the West U Elementary grounds to function better as a community park

West U Elementary campus is the largest open space in the city. It is centrally located and an important part of the City Center. The school building is a larger traditional-style civic building that provides a sense of dignity, tradition and permanence to the heart of the city. The west half of the campus serves as the home for organized sports leagues for children and is the center of public activity for many West U residents on weekends and evenings. The campus offers a scale of open space that is unique in West University. It has the potential to serve more effectively as a Community Park, providing open green space for all of the citizens of the city, while maintaining the organized sports focus important to generations of West U residents.

A Make the park more inviting to the public

- Eliminate visual barriers that prevent views into park along Auden
- Eliminate unsightly clutter along Auden
- Create open, landscaped park corridor between sports fields
- Construct new concessions / restrooms in center of park



A Develop drop-off zone along Auden St. to reduce traffic congestion

A Construct new concession / restroom building in the center of the park

A Construct new seating / press-box facilities at the corner of University Blvd. and Auden St. to replace the 'Dugout' with an 'Urban Landmark' facility





A LOOK AT THE FUTURE

• Recreation Facilities for the Future

One of the most basic and important roles of the West University parks system is to provide adequate recreation environments for the citizens. It is apparent from the survey, *An Assessment of Parks & Recreation Needs in West University Place*, that fitness and recreation are an important part of life for many West U residents. West University must meet the long-term needs of the entire community.

Recreation Facilities for the Future

OBJECTIVES

Provide recreation facilities to meet the long term needs of the entire community

- **Current facilities primarily provide for young children and families. Seniors and young teens should be better accommodated.**



- **Provide facilities for adult sport leagues and expanded youth sports leagues**

- Outdoor leagues: softball and soccer
- Indoor leagues: basketball and volleyball

- **Broaden capabilities and capacity for swimming**

- Accommodate variety of users: families, lap swimmers, lessons, exercise, teens
- Accommodate volume of swimmers during peak season



- **City-wide recreation facilities should be located primarily at community parks**

- **Ensure tennis is provided in adequate facilities at appropriate locations**

- Limit facilities in Neighborhood Parks to single courts where possible. Multiple courts dominate the limited space of small neighborhood parks and attract excessive vehicular traffic
- Multiple tennis courts are appropriate in Community Parks, where there is more space and provisions for traffic and parking



- **Provide facilities for dog owners to exercise dogs in an appropriate setting**

Recreation Facilities for the Future

ACTION

A Ensure parks are accessible to seniors and mobility impaired residents

- Review access within and around parks and reconstruct sidewalks, steps and ramps to provide walkable access
- Add adequate seating in shaded areas
- Add planting, screens, low fences to existing parks to provide appropriate delineation of spaces within parks to allow choices about proximity to other activities
- Provide continuous, safe sidewalks and curb ramps in the traditional sidewalk configuration



A Develop a Skate Park

- Consider joint development and use
- Accommodate parking, noise and high activity



A Develop an animal recreation facility at city-owned property on Braeswood

- Provide appropriate separation from other activities
- Accommodate auto access and parking with pedestrian access
- Coordinate development with interest groups



A Monitor city-wide need for active recreation, such as tennis and basketball

- Reduce active recreation facilities such as tennis and basketball in Neighborhood Parks and relocate to Community Parks

Recreation Facilities for the Future

ACTION

A Acquire the Southwest YMCA and develop as a Community Park

Since 1990, there has been discussion of the Southwest YMCA moving to another campus, and the property being offered for sale. This property offers a one-of-a-kind opportunity for the City of West University to dramatically enhance park and recreation facilities for West U residents. West U currently does not have an appropriate, functioning Community Park that has adequate open space, recreation facilities, vehicular access, parking and separation from residences. Due to the scarcity of available land in the city, it is probable that without this property the City would never have a Community Park with appropriate size and facilities. It is vital that the City not miss the opportunity to acquire this facility.

- Complement facilities at Colonial Park – Colonial Park swimming and indoor recreation facilities are frequently overburdened. This facility offers opportunity to relieve overcrowding and space limitations.
- Athletic fields provide opportunity to offer sports activities:
 - Adult team sports
 - Practice space for children's sports leagues
 - Unstructured open space for West U residents
- Gymnasium is an important recreation amenity for West U residents
 - Adult, teen, youth and children's sports leagues (basketball, volleyball)
 - Space for large exercise and dance classes
 - Unstructured recreation for all residents
 - Teen Activities – sports, parties and classes
- Existing parking lots and access from Bellaire Blvd. enable vehicular access without disturbing nearby residents

Possible Development Scenarios

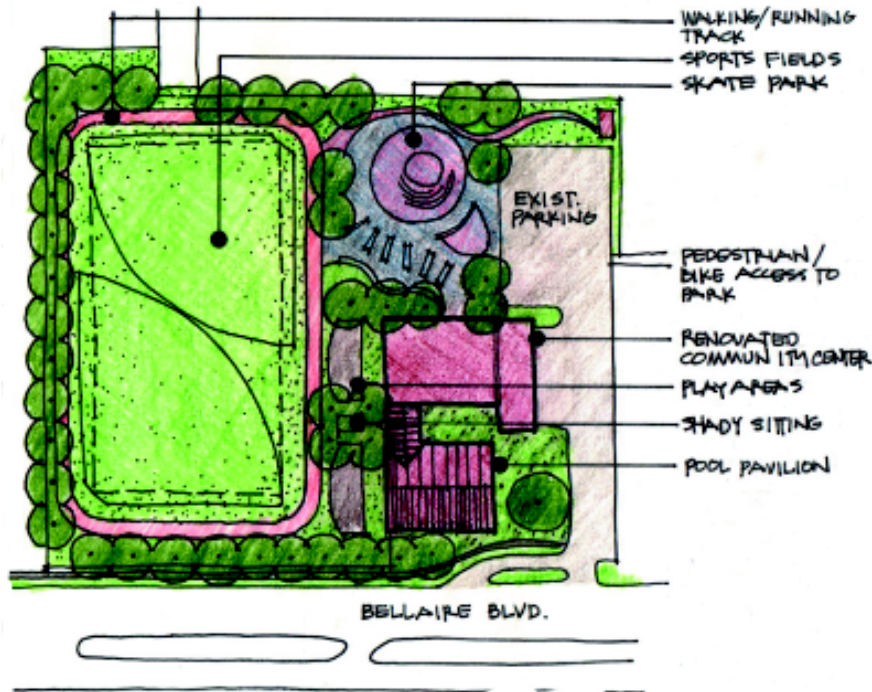
With over five acres, the site is large enough to accommodate a variety of outdoor and indoor recreation activities. Once the property is acquired, it is important to develop a long range master plan for development, that could be implemented in phases. A wide variety of concepts might be explored, with various combinations of use for the existing and new facilities. Recreation facilities might include:

- Gymnasium
- Meeting Rooms
- Weight rooms and exercise facilities
- Multi-court tennis center if demand is sufficient
- Covered swimming pool, with continuous rolling doors for open air summer use
- Practice and competition sports fields
- Outdoor basketball pavilion
- Nature center
- Jogging / walking track
- Skateboard park
- Playgrounds
- Picnic / party pavilion

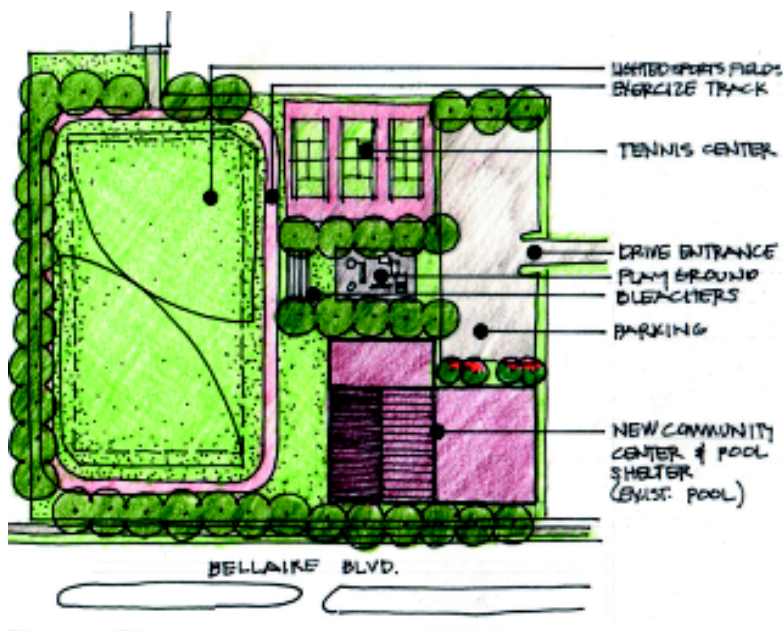
Recreation Facilities for the Future

ACTION

Scenario 1 indicates the existing building renovated, a pool pavilion, skate park, renovated sports fields with adjacent jogging track and play areas and access from Bellaire Blvd.



Scenario 2 indicates a new building, pool pavilion, tennis center, sports fields and vehicular access from West U (Cason St. and / or Community Dr.)





Executive Summary
An Assessment of Parks and Recreation Needs in West University Place
June 3, 2000

Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences
Texas A&M University

WEST U PARK & RECREATION SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The West U Park and Recreation Survey was sent out to all West U households in early February, 2000. Altogether, out of 5650 surveys sent out, 1471 usable surveys were returned, accounting for a 26% response. The high number of returns ensured that the results, from a statistical point of view, are within a satisfactory range of acceptability. For most results, readers can be 99% confident that the actual outcome in the population is plus or minus 3%. As in the 1999 West U Community Survey, there was almost identical representation from each of the seven West U neighborhoods. The following is a synopsis of major findings.

In what outdoor recreation do residents participate?

- Residents participate in a range of outdoor recreation activities on a frequent or regular basis (i.e., more than once a month). Several of these activities are non-motorized, "trail-based" activities, including walking for pleasure, running or jogging, and bicycling. **Walking** for pleasure, in fact, is the most commonly pursued outdoor recreation activities among residents. More than 80% of respondents said that household members frequently (i.e., more than once a month) walk for pleasure. The survey also revealed that 40% of residents walk for pleasure *almost daily*. Just over half of the residents said that household members **run or jog** on a regular basis; an equal number of residents said that household members **ride a bicycle** on a frequent basis.
- A majority (60%) of residents also said that household members **visit parks** on a frequent basis. Nearly half of West U residents said that household members go **swimming** regularly. Two other activities—going to **playgrounds** (42%) and **wildlife watching** (35%) are also pursued frequently by many residents.

Where do residents participate in outdoor recreation activities?

- Residents pursue many outdoor recreation activities in West U. The vast majority of residents (85%) reported that household members **walk** for pleasure within West U. Nearly three out of four residents also said that household members **visit local parks** within West U. Just over half of West U residents said that household members go to **playgrounds**, **swim**, and ride a **bicycle** in West U. Just under half of West U residents reported that household members **run or jog** within West U.
- There are a few activities in which residents reported that household members participate in *outside West U* far more than they do within West U. These include attending special events (40%), attending outdoor concerts (35%), golfing (34%), fishing (29%), and observing wildlife (26%).

In what outdoor recreation activities can't some residents participate within West U?

- Some residents listed outdoor recreation activities in which they would like to participate in West U, but can't. Among those who listed an activity, the most frequently mentioned of these are walking or hiking (13%), walking or playing with a dog (13%), bicycling (9%), golfing (9%), running or jogging (7%), playing basketball, (7%), and swimming (6%).
- Residents said the following factors limited their participation in these activities within West U: Lack of facilities and activities, rules against dogs in parks, the perception that parks and facilities are crowded or of poor quality (primarily swimming and basketball), the perception that sidewalks are of poor quality, and traffic problems.

How often do residents use West U parks?

- 79% of residents said that household members had visited a West U park during the last 12 months. Non-users were asked why they didn't use parks. Significantly, 33% of these individuals said they felt that West U parks are places for young children.
- Residents reported that household members use Colonial Park more often than any other West U park. Nearly half (48%) of the residents surveyed said that household members visit Colonial Park frequently (i.e., more than once a month). Thirty-five percent of residents reported that household members visit Weir park on a regular basis, 31% visit West U Elementary regularly, 15% visit Whitt Johnson Park regularly, 14% visit Judson Park regularly, and only 11% visit Huffington on a frequent basis.

How would residents improve West U parks?

- Residents who visited parks were asked how they would improve those West U parks they visit most often. Seventy-six individuals said they would upgrade or improve playground equipment, 44 people said they would add public bathrooms in parks, 43 individuals said they would put fences and gates around playgrounds, 42 people said they would add places to sit, 41 individuals said they would add or upgrade basketball courts, 35 people said they would add picnic facilities and pavilions, and 34 residents said they would add drinking fountains.

How do residents get to West U parks?

- The most frequent way people travel to parks in West U is by walking or running (87%), followed by driving a car or van (62%) and bicycling (44%).

What age groups visit West U parks the most often?

- Young children (under the age of 5) and grade school children (5 to 12 year olds) visit West U parks more frequently than others. Almost half of young children and 28% of grade school children visit West U parks almost daily.
- Adults between the ages of 25 to 44 and domestic help are the next most frequent visitors of West U parks, with more than 1/3 of domestic employees visiting parks on a daily basis.
- Young teens (13 to 18 year olds) and older teens/young adults (19 to 24 year olds) visit West U parks far less than their younger counterparts.
- About one-quarter of older adults (65 years of age and older) visit West U parks once a month or more.

In what activities do visitors participate when they visit West U parks?

- The two most frequently pursued activities (one in which people participate at least once a month) in West U parks are using playground equipment (45%) and swimming for fun (38%).
- 23% of West U residents frequently engage in passive activities (e.g., relaxing or reading a book) when they visit parks.
- About 1 in 5 residents use parks frequently for swimming, baseball and soccer.
- One in 10 use the parks frequently for tennis, weights/exercise room or basketball.

- Only a small fraction play football, racquetball or volleyball in West U parks frequently.

What are residents' attitudes about park and recreation issues in West U?

- Two-thirds of residents felt that West U should acquire additional park land and open space. For example, 44% agreed and 22% strongly agreed that West U should have more undeveloped open spaces.
- Residents felt that parks were far more suitable for young children than any other age groups.
- Two-thirds of residents believe West U should spend more on improving existing facilities before building new facilities.
- Slightly more than 4 in 10 residents think West U needs another swimming pool. About two-thirds of West U residents think there are enough tennis and basketball facilities in the city.
- Survey respondents were quite satisfied with the level of maintenance and cleanliness in West U parks. For example, 75% of residents agreed and 17% strongly agreed that West U parks are well maintained. As well, residents also expressed a high degree of satisfaction with safety issues in West U parks. Only 13% of residents' felt that security was a problem in West U parks.
- Residents hold complex ideas regarding their access to parks. While only 39% said they are not in favor of having a park located next to their home, only 38% said they would use parks more if they lived closer to one.

What initiatives do residents believe that West U should pursue in the next few years?

Out of 11 possible initiatives for West U to pursue in the next few years, residents supported three as a medium or high priority.

- Developing bicycle lanes on existing streets was selected by 56% of residents
- Fifty-six percent of residents said that it is important to acquire land for large community-wide parks
- Purchasing residential lots and converting them to neighborhood parks was selected by 54% as a medium or high priority

What is the single most important park and recreation initiative?

Open ended answers indicated over 20 different ideas with strongest support for three (with more than 100 responses each)

- Acquire additional parkland
- Maintain and upgrade existing facilities
- Acquire the YMCA site

What are residents' opinions about ways to pay for park and recreation services?

- Almost all (98%) West U residents favored using donations to pay for park and recreation services. Almost 60% supported using other methods to provide revenue, such as fees and charges, property taxes, and bonds.